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ABSTRACT

The Public Law enacted in 1971 requires that fundamental subject matter areas taught in Wisconsin's public schools be assessed. It is proposed in this paper that assessment of the State's social studies programs needs to focus its attention on the school environment, which educators can and should control, change, and improve, rather than assessing student performance or on breaking social studies into component parts. In essence, evaluation procedures need to focus on the cultural environment; i.e. what the schools are doing to provide quality educational experiences and opportunities permitting examining, questioning, and testing evidence and beliefs, which influence the thought and actions of students and which contribute to the social studies goal of increasing human understanding. When assessment focuses on academic achievement of students it only measures the circumstances of birth and social situation. Three questions describing the existing pattern of social studies experience are: 1) What opportunities are provided by teachers to involve students in the action of problematic inquiry? 2) What is the role of student and teacher in social study? and 3) Do the methods and materials of social studies instruction maintain the integrity of the social disciplines? (SJM)

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SOCIAL STUDIES ASSESSMENT IN WISCONSIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Position Paper

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INTRODUCTION

In 1971 the Wisconsin State Legislature enacted Public Law 115.28(10). This law requires that there be an assessment of the fundamental subject matter areas taught in the state's public schools. The law compels the Department of Public Instruction to "develop an educational assessment program to measure objectively the adequacy and efficiency of educational programs offered by public schools in this state. The programs shall include, without limitation because of enumeration, methods by which pupil achievement in fundamental course areas . . . will be objectively measured each year."

While the law may seem reasonably unambiguous on first glance, there are a number of problems that arise when one attempts to operationalize a concept of assessment. The problems can be grouped in two areas: First, it is necessary to establish a set of purposes for social studies education before any assessment program can proceed. This presents some difficulties in that the field of social studies is known for its lack of consensus as to goals and objectives. Second, it is necessary to decide on assessment procedures. Should the assessment program focus its attention on student knowledge and basic skill development as indicators of school effectiveness and adequacy? Or should the assessment program focus on what schools are actually doing to provide educational experiences and opportunities for pupils in social studies? The major difference between these two approaches is that one assessment program places emphasis upon student performance in order to make judgments about school quality and the second assessment program

places direct emphasis upon school environment and the opportunities it provides. Student performance within the scope of the second approach is considered important only as it serves to illustrate the nature of the social context of school experiences.

In this paper we have taken a clear position that a viable assessment program compels educators to give attention to the second focus; i.e., the quality of the environment which the school provides. This stance is developed out of an analysis of the research and literature in the fields of assessment, measurement, history, social science and social studies education.

ASSUMPTIONS OF ASSESSMENT

In order to clarify the position taken in this paper, it is important to begin with an analysis of recent trends in assessment/evaluation literature. The purpose of this is to identify some of the assumptions that lie behind assessment programs and evaluation procedures. The relationships among pupils, schools, curriculum, teachers and various environmental factors will be examined in order to make better judgments about what can be assessed in meaningful and useful ways. Implicit in this assessment paper is that a need exists not only to find out the status of social studies in Wisconsin, but also to provide a reasonable framework from which to judge the quality of social studies education. To find out "what is" (assessment) as well as "what should be" (evaluation) are logical outcomes of any assessment/evaluation activities in social studies education.

One of the fundamental assumptions behind much current work in assessment is that a direct relationship exists between pupil achievement and specific instructional efforts by the schools. The assumption is simple and pervasive. Assessment programs should identify by means of knowledge and skill tests those schools with high and low pupil achievement. Then, by

comparing the characteristics of these schools with high and low pupil achievement, it can be determined which teaching and curriculum factors are responsible for the significant variations in pupil achievement. Those schools that produce high pupil achievement provide the basis for modifying those schools that do not produce high pupil achievement.

Logically appealing as these assumptions and arguments are, they ignore a rich field of scholarship which supports a contrary conclusion. Stephens, for example, in a review of educational research, found that there is a constancy of school achievement no matter what instructional, curricular or administrative variable is introduced.[1] Thus, Stephens' compilation of studies indicates that such variables as independent study vs. regular class attendance, programmed instruction vs. "regular" instruction, lecture vs. discussion, and heterogeneous vs. homogeneous grouping all turn out to produce no significant differences in pupil achievement. This constancy of achievement is due, according to Stephens, to what he calls the spontaneous tendencies of human beings and also to the culture of the school.

The term "culture of the school" is used to refer to those general environmental features which influence the thought and actions of students. The patterns, opportunities and expectations of school life ordinarily teach children as much or more than the intended curriculum of various subject matters. For example, Phillip Jackson found that through the use of praise and power created by the classroom environment, children are taught to be passive and acquiescent.[2] Similarly, the culture of the classroom does much to determine how children perceive learning and what it means to investigate a problem or arrive at knowledge.[3] Two students, for example, may "know" the same fact or hold the same conclusion. However, if the first student was

given the knowledge by a teacher, and the second arrived at his knowledge through some form of tested experience, there are considerable differences in the cultural contexts surrounding that knowledge. Repeated experiences by the first student of receiving his knowledge from an authority figure teaches him dependency on authority. Repeated experiences by the second student of testing knowledge in some reliable way demands of him responsibility and initiative in dealing with ideas. Assessment should concern itself, therefore, with those pervasive factors in the classroom which do much in the way of determining students' conception of knowledge and social study.

It is apparent, of course, that great individual growth in achievement does occur while students are in school, but manipulation of instructional variables would seem to be less important than maturational, parental and general social influences including that of the school's culture. An example from Stephens makes this point. In one school system, children in the second grade were taught the word "sincerely" but not "customary."[4] Each year the children were tested on both these words. By grade nine the mastery of spelling "sincerely" disappeared and achievement in spelling the two words was indistinguishable. Stephens argues that maturation, out-of-school experiences and casual experiences in school facilitated mastery of both words.

In the most recent analysis of research in the area of cognitive achievement, Christopher Jencks, et al, reports on a wide range of educational research done since 1960.[5] One of the many studies on which they report is

Project Talent. It involved 5,000 students in 91 predominantly white high schools. The students were tested in the 9th and again in the 12th grade. Jencks compared student performance in these grades on six tests: Vocabulary, Social Studies Information, Reading Comprehension, Abstract Reasoning, Mathematics and Arithmetic Computation.

Jencks concludes that "ninth grade scores largely determine twelfth grade scores. Changes between ninth and twelfth grade have almost nothing to do with the school a student is in. If we look at vocabulary, for example, we find that all students' scores increase between ninth and twelfth grade. If we predict students' twelfth grade scores from their ninth grade scores, knowing nothing about their school, our predictions are never off by an average of more than 5 points for any school . . . . If we average schools' effects on several different tests, the average twelfth grader's overall performance is within 3 points of what we would expect on the basis of his ninth grade scores."[6] In effect, traditional measures of achievement do not provide indexes of school effectiveness but of other nonschool produced variables.

Even efforts to systematically modify and control teaching-learning techniques in the form of performance contracting by private educational corporations have not been able to produce significant statistical differences in the learning outcomes of students.[7] Similarly, we can find no evidence to suggest that performance objectives or criterion-reference measures will produce any net change in children's performance. There is, in fact, empirical evidence that suggests these particular modifications and administrative arrangements to intensify teacher efforts do <u>not</u> account for any measureable difference in achievement.[8]

The conclusion one is forced to draw is that measures of general academic performance are closely related to (1) general intelligence level of pupils and (2) the socio-economic background of their parents. Stephens suggests that these two factors account for 60% of all the differences in achievement measured by academic performance tests. If assessment focuses on academic achievement, then it simply measures the circumstances of birth and social situation. In short, achievement tests do not indicate the worth of schools but rather, in a covert manner, the worth of children. To put the matter another way, measuring students in terms of academic achievement gives more information about their general intelligence and social class than about the quality of the schools they attend.

It seems, therefore, that any program of assessment in the State of Wisconsin ought not to focus on general cognitive (academic) achievement if the intention is to gain information that will help improve the schools of the State. Since there is little that schools can do about innate mental abilities of students, it is necessary to focus attention upon the culture of the school rather than upon measures of children's achievement. It is the environment of school that educators can and should control, change and improve.

A second problem in attempting to develop a test-item assessment of social studies education is the absence of a consensus among educators as to what knowledge should be learned. The assumption is frequently made, such as in the constructive criterion-reference measures, that educators can specify all the knowledge students should know. The problem related to this approach becomes apparent when we consider the American Revolution: Should children become acquainted with the prevailing conception of the American Revolution

as a rebellion against tyranny and oppressions, focusing upon the activities of the Sons of Liberty or the Committee of Correspondence? Or should the materials of school include revisionist frameworks, such as the comparative roles of merchant and farming groups in advocating war against Britain? Should the generalizations and facts of the American frontier life offer the expansionist framework or deal with the perceptions of the American Indians and Mexicans with respect to the Westward movement?

Each time one alters the framework, there are different facts to assess, different generalizations to deal with, and often conflicting purposes for the development of knowledge. Educators can never define all the possibilities of action, variety of answers or behaviors that may arise out of children's curiosities. The obligation of school instruction is not to choose statements about human affairs that children should accept but to provide an intellectual climate that engages them in the testing of ideas so that they can become responsible, to some extent, for their own ideas.

The predefining of activities and knowledge implicit in forms of measures such as criterion-reference tests employs assumptions about knowing that are inconsistent with the scholarship of the social disciplines and the realities of a modern, changing world. Predefining knowledge or behavior is antithetical to the very notion of social inquiry developed from the early works of Francis Bacon to the present activities of social scientists. One of the things we have learned from the social disciplines is that there is no certainty to ideas or static relationship between men and fact. Social scientists view the knowledge of their findings as tenuous, produced by the methods of their study, and accepted on an "until further notice" basis.

What the proponents of student outcome (performance) assessment have not come to grips with is the relationship between knowledge and those who create and interpret that knowledge. When knowledge is standardized, it becomes an established truth rather than part of a problematic search. Knowledge is conceived as a fixed object to be given, leaving no room to deal with the unpredictable and diverse aspects of life. The result is a restricted notion of what it means to know. In summary, the use of any absolute measures for assessment denies the very worth of social study as an endeavor to increase human understanding.

For assessment purposes, then, knowledge and/or the behavior of students must be viewed as the by-products of their search for understanding. The knowledge children possess comes from the experiences of social study; i.e. the activity of examining, questioning, and testing the evidence and beliefs that one has. The purpose of social studies education is to move men toward inquiry and reflection about human problems. The purpose of assessment should be to determine what opportunities are available to students that promote this general goal.

INTERDEPENDENCY OF CURRICULAR COMPONENTS

In view of the general position stated in the previous section, it may be helpful to present a discussion of a common approach to assessment and evaluation--that is to identify the basic components of social studies curriculum and select from these components specific examples for assessment. For example, the State Department of Public Instruction has developed a comprehensive position for social studies curriculum in Bulletin No. 185, Knowledge, Processes and Values in the New Social Studies.[9] This document is a well-balanced approach to curriculum and serves as an important backdrop to any assessment program. However, it would not be effective to directly translate the distinctions and categories

made in the bulletin to a program of assessment. The separation of curriculum for assessment purposes into the categories of knowledge, processes, and values distorts the content of those categories. Instead, these categories should be considered parts of an interdependent system. In order to clarify this point, a brief look will be taken at the three components to indicate why they can not be separated in assessment.

Knowledge. Certainly one could build an assessment program by testing students on the various knowledge items that might be agreed upon. Thus, students could be asked to recall the year that Columbus discovered America, or to describe the contents of Woodrow Wilson's fourteenth point. Also within the domain of knowledge assessment, students can be tested on their understanding of various historical interpretations, such as Charles Beard's interpretation of the origins of the Constitution. Student understanding of general statements can also be assessed, like the "law of supply and demand" from the discipline of economics. There are a host of particular facts, concepts, generalizations and other statements which men have made about their culture and the culture of others which make up the current body of scholarly knowledge found in the disciplines, and it is certainly possible to make these a part of an assessment program.

However, in the first part of this paper it was suggested there are very significant limitations to this kind of testing, at least in terms of the information one can gain from the results. In actuality one tests the general intelligence level and social class of individual students. But even if it were possible to make valid inferences about the quality of teachers, curriculum and schools from a knowledge assessment, this approach is necessarily truncated in terms of how this knowledge is created and its meaning for individuals and the general society. While scholarly knowledge from various disciplines

can be important and useful, it is not apparent in advance what specific knowledge will be needed by students. Furthermore, the teaching of knowledge (and testing for it) apart from any sense of active involvement on the part of students sharply limits its meaning. The learning of knowledge is not legitimate if students do not get a sense of how it was created, how it functions to give insight into society, and what its limitations are. Students may get this sense in part from listening to lectures, reading texts and secondary sources, but they must also experience for themselves the act of problematic inquiry. A fundamental purpose of social studies is to help pupils gain a sense of how knowledge is created and how it relates to human problems. Any program of assessment must address itself to this.

Processes. An assessment program for various logical processes, such as generalizing, classifying, hypothesis testing, etc., could be developed. Again, however, the usefulness of the information gained from this kind of testing is suspect. It is suspect because it is quite likely that an assessment program built around these logical processes would, in fact, turn out to be a general intelligence test, and it is also suspect because the results from various schools would not tell us much about the culture of those schools.

Moreover, process tests are truncated because students involved in problematic inquiry are immersed in many, if not all, of the processes in a continuous and interacting mode. Part of the dynamics of this mode is that knowledge and value components are mixed with the various processes. Thus, there is necessarily a significant difference between performing an individual act such as classifying data and engaging in the larger process of social inquiry. The process of social study is larger than the sum of the several individual processes. It is through an immersion in the total constellation of activities that an individual can understand the set

of attitudes, values, knowledge, and methods of study that are essential to the handling of human problems.

Most importantly, however, an assessment of students' ability to utilize individual processes does not say anything about the opportunities available for them to engage in actual study of society in the schools they attend. Student scores on process tests do not indicate whether schools are encouraging problematic inquiry into the problems and issues of society. An assessment program should be concerned with determining how successful schools are in providing opportunities and experiences that lead students to utilize the subprocesses as part of a functioning whole in the pursuit of social study.

Values. Inherent in any social studies curriculum is a component of values. Sometimes they are more or less hidden and covert, but it is difficult to conceive of a social studies program that is value free. The very choices one makes about what to study reflects the values a person holds. Thus, for example, in choosing to study methods of solid waste disposal, or anti-ballistic missiles, or institutional racism, one exhibits a preference and priority that is value laden. Also, values are implicit in the concepts we use to direct inquiry, the standards and rules for collecting data, and the very types of generalizations produced by a disciplined search. There is no neutrality in social knowledge.

Any assessment program though, must face the problem of dealing with values; the essential question being what is it about values that should be assessed? To what extent should assessment be concerned with the values students hold? To what extent is assessment concerned with the opportunities students have and the processes they use in handling problems of value?

Generally speaking social studies as an area is concerned with those values associated with social - democratic behavior. Just what these values mean in

terms of specific behavior is difficult and in some respects impossible to specify. For example, were those "sitting-in" at segregated lunch counters and thereby breaking local law engaging in desirable social - democratic behavior? By one set of standards law-breaking is the antithesis of democratic behavior, while from another viewpoint the breaking of unjust laws is justified in terms of social change that results in greater equality for all citizens.

While there is no consensus on the exact meaning of democratic values and bahavior, there is a general commitment to the Western constitutional tradition. This tradition embraces the general values of consent of the governed, due process of law, freedom of press, religion, and speech, and the inherent equality and dignity of all men. There are, of course, honest differences in the specific meaning and application of these values. The result of these differences are policy disputes and public controversies. The application of democratic institutions and values results in the peaceful resolution of the conflict inherent in these disagreements.

An important dimension of social studies education, therefore, is the involvement of students in the analysis of public controversy from the standpoint of democratic values. Students should be involved in construing the past, present, and future in terms of values in conflict and the evidence which bears upon those values. Separation of values from knowledge and inquiry processes is artificial and naive. It is illegitimate to isolate values in any sense from the context in which they arise, become challenged, and are reestablished or modified. Students should explicitly explore the interrelationships between knowledge, values, and the processes by which human conflict can be creatively resolved. Any assessment program should take into account the nature of value conflict and clarification as it might occur in the schools.

What is needed is a way of assessing the schools in terms of how they provide opportunities and frameworks for handling values as they occur in the fabric of democratic conflict and in the search for knowledge about human problems.

The brief analysis of the three curricular components--knowledge, processes and values-- indicates that if each were taken separately and made the object of assessment, the result would be a truncated and distorted notion of what it means to have students learn about the study of society. In addition, testing students for their knowledge or their skill in manipulating processes is not likely to tell us much about the culture of the schools they attend or the teachers who instruct them.

Instead of focusing on individual student performance level, and rather than breaking social studies into component curriculum parts, an assessment program would be more effective if it focused on the general condition in which children work. The following framework of problematic inquiry directs attention to some of the essential characteristics of the situation in which study should occur. It is from this framework that general questions will be tentatively formulated for the development of procedures in assessment.

THE FOCUS OF ASSESSMENT: PROBLEMATIC INQUIRY

The position advocated in this paper is that the concept of problematic inquiry should form the intellectual and operational basis of any assessment program. The meaning of "problematic" is essentially psychological and refers to a person's involvement in the resolution of a perceived difficulty. As Hunt and Metcalf point out, "Many of the problems that are covered in a problems course are not felt as problems by most students. In fact, many teachers do not feel these problems are problems. To feel a problem is to be aroused psychologically to the point where one wants to learn enough about it to do something about it. This feeling has two components, doubt and concern."[10]

In other words, social studies helps individuals formulate their feelings of doubt, concern, uneasiness or curiosity into questions that in principle can be answered by examining the available data in systematic ways and with historical perspective.

There are a variety of problematic situations that pupils might consider in school. Some of these problems are essentially questions of fact or knowledge. For example, a question could focus on how it happened that the land of the Menomonie Indians lost its status as a reservation. Or another question might focus on determining how the Hopi Indians provided for a division of labor in their society. These are questions of fact in that they require one to make observations of some kind of data.

There is a second kind of problem which involves choice or policy decision. This is different from the first kind in that values are explicitly involved, although problems of fact are also present. For example, "Should Christmas celebrations be banned from public schools?" "Should the state legalize abortion?" These questions require strategies for helping people clarify their values before an answer can be reached.

Students can and should deal with both questions of fact and questions of policy in their social studies curriculum. However, the quality of being problematic is crucial to the legitimation of inquiry. To the extent students feel the questions they are investigating are real and that answers are in need of being found, then that inquiry has become a genuine intellectual challenge. All of the goals dealing with knowledge, processes and values are attainable only when students sense that the questions they are dealing with are real and significant. In any assessment program, some measure will have to be made of the success the school is having in the creation of problematic situations in which students become engaged.

The goal of having students engage in inquiry is popularly identified with the emergence of the "new social studies." The term inquiry has been frequently applied to materials and strategies aimed at having students use some form of factual data on the way to testing hypotheses. For the purpose of assessment, inquiry needs to be much more broadly defined to include all those efforts at resolving problematic situations through the use of data and systematic reflection, including those questions which deal explicitly with values and policy. Also, it is important to view inquiry as a total process rather than as a series of discrete operations. The purpose and object of inquiry implies that students come to understand the complexity, uncertainty, success and failure of trying to work through a problem that holds real concern for them.

Problematic inquiry in the social studies does not seek to make "little-league" historians and social scientists out of students. Instead, the intent should be to capture the essence of what it means to inquire in the best sense of that term. Students should experience the act of inventing facts from the data they have available. That is, pupils need to learn how to take commonplace experiences and shape them into evidence useful in answering questions. The nature of inquiry is a creative rather than a passive process, and children should learn how to interact with books, artifacts, events and people in an effort to make them respond to the questions of concern. For example, the language of an ordinary textbook in the classroom can become the focus of an inquiry into the treatment of minorities in children's books. Or, children should learn how to confront what happens on the playground, school or community to study questions such as who rules. These kinds of problems challenge students to create their own hypotheses, facts and conclusions based on their own collection of the data.

In terms of developing an assessment program, it is essential that close attention be given to the role that pupils have in the classroom. Problematic inquiry requires that they become active participants in the actions that characterize the search for answers to compelling questions. "Like swimming or baseball, (social study) makes use of skills that are learned with practice. No amount of reading about history or swimming or baseball can substitute for engaging in the real activity. . . . (Students) are going to have to learn how to play the game, for only in doing so will they encounter the drama, the adventure and the spirit of it."[11] What is advocated here is a participatory role for students as they learn the various ways of engaging in problematic inquiry.

If students are to become inquirers, teachers must provide settings appropriate to the problems at hand. The usual array of textbooks no longer suffices when questions and the search for data go beyond standard curriculum subjects. There are certain experiences, for example, that cannot be simulated in classrooms through examinations of books. The study of history, for example, demands at one point that children immerse themselves in a variety of situations found in community life. Students may observe artifacts such as an old mill, examine documents such as census reports, or talk to people about their recollections of past events. In a similar manner, investigations of "power" should involve children in learning how to confront the activities on their playground and school, as well as examining various books found in school libraries. Students should have opportunities to ask, for example, who makes decisions in their school yard and determine where power lies. On the other hand, where study can be engaged in only vicariously, there should be a variety of accurate materials for children to examine. To understand Eskimo life, for example, children should encounter the legends,

myths, language and anecdotal records of daily encounters found in films to develop an awareness of how these groups of people give meaning to life. In each situation of study, students must have opportunity to consider what data is, how it can be interpreted and when one has adequately answered a question. This entails children working in a variety of social settings and with a variety of questions. Without the contexts of study being consistent with the problems we explore, we cannot expect children to assume the roles inherent in study and to understand the mystery, spirit, and excitement of this intellectual endeavor.

Integrally related, the patterns of classroom interaction must develop and sustain the idea that the worth of a belief or value lies in the ability of a person to put ideas to the tests of adequacy as well as the test of time. The classroom, above all else, should encourage and even require initiative and responsibility in deciding how one goes about finding answers to human problems. Priviledge and status must be based upon supportive relations, mutual respect, trust and involvement in the intellectual quests of social studies. The role of the teacher is to guide the study, testing, and re-thinking of traditions, ideas, and prescriptions. An assessment program must concern itself with determining the extent to which students are provided opportunities to take the kind of initiative and responsibility suggested here. Assessment should be directed at determining the honesty of the roles played by those engaged in problematic inquiry.

SUMMARY: A GUIDE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

In light of the above, the following three questions focus upon essential variables of the action of problematic inquiry. These questions provide a framework for constructing a description of the existing pattern of social studies experiences. Only as we develop qualitative descriptions of the rela-

tionship between students and interactional settings can we begin to understand and evaluate the practice of schools.

1. WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED BY TEACHERS TO INVOLVE STUDENTS IN THE ACTION OF PROBLEMATIC INQUIRY?

The first question is concerned with the social situation in which curriculum is implemented. Specifically, assessment should be concerned with various contexts of study available to students. Some questions that may guide assessment are:

1 (A) Are students involved in a variety of real problematic situations? Are students involved in seeking answers to questions of knowledge? Do class activities direct attention to the study of public issues and the ethical dilemmas they pose? In each situation, we should further consider: Do the problems of study reflect real doubt, concern, or curiosity? Or, are they merely related to exercises that reestablish foregone conclusions?

1 (B) Are the situations in which children seek data appropriate for the questions of study? In the study of community, for example, do students have opportunities to confront various social context, institutions, and human relationships that exist beyond the walls of the school? The study of social issues might lead children to examine newspapers, interview community members, observe public agencies, or engage in action to alter government decisions. In studies such as these, the educational settings of school must be considered too limited for developing adequate answers.

1 (C) What is considered data? Too often, school experiences have been "closed inquiry." Questions are posed by teachers and materials are carefully selected to support a predefined answer. In contrast, schools must provide an intellectual climate that compels children to consider what sources of evidence are appropriate to their inquiry, how it should be gathered and inter-

preted. Do the experiences of social study give children practice in constructing data from a variety of objects, events, and human interactions? Do the activities of school guide children in thinking of all human interactions as possible data or as just those things collected by the school? Evidence, for example, concerning "who rules" may be found in community newspapers, public meetings, or in peer interaction on school yards. Legends, myths, religious beliefs, census data and other artifacts may provide appropriate data for study of our own culture as well as that of people far away. All human experience must be viewed as "material" for study and worthy of scrutiny.

2. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF STUDENT AND TEACHER IN SOCIAL STUDY?

The variables related to role provide a second dimension for understanding the interplay of students, teachers, and social context of schools. In identifying role as a major concept of assessment, we are concerned with the expectations, demands, beliefs, and norms that channel children's activity. Some of the subquestions that may guide role possibilities available in school are:

2 (A) What relationships exist between teachers and students in social study? In fundamental ways, the status and privileges in inquiry must be fluid rather than fixed and hierarchical. The purpose and expectations of school experiences should not be to exert the teachers' authority in matters of knowledge but to enable children to become their own authority in dealing with social affairs. Teachers should guide children in studying, testing, and rethinking the traditions, ideas, and prescriptions by which we live. Are teachers helping students in formulating and confronting social problems? Do teachers help students raise questions about their experiences and interpretations, guiding them to relevant sources? Are children given respect and authority in determining answers to questions of study? Are interactions based upon supportive relations, mutual respect, and trust in study rather than upon organizational

hierarchies? An important focus of assessment, then, becomes--Is the role of teacher consistent with that of student?

2 (B) Do children have responsibility, initative, and power in determining questions and procedures of study? Do children have opportunities to formulate the general, heuristic questions of instruction into specific answerable questions? Are school experiences enabling children to develop their own curiosities, working out the variety of experiences they come upon to give meaning to our social situation?

2 (C) What relationship do children and teachers have with the materials of school? Are students passive to the information given in textbooks or discussion in school? Are the ideas and descriptions treated as things to be absorbed, learned, and re-summarized through tests of knowledge or behavior? Or, are children expected to view materials with a scepticism? A characteristic of the social disciplines and social inquiry is that life itself is problematic. In assessing schools and the role of students, it is important to understand how children and teachers relate to materials of study.

2 (D) What is considered an answer? Assessing the situation in which inquiry occurs requires that educators focus upon the criteria teachers and children accept in judging the worth of answers. Are children encouraged to seek a wide range of data? Do answers reflect children's attempts to synthesize a variety of sources or rather are answers summaries of what a textbook, encyclopedia, or teacher has said? Do teacher and student accept their answers on "an until further notice" basis?

3. DO THE METHODS AND MATERIALS OF SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION MAINTAIN THE INTEGRETY OF THE SOCIAL DISCIPLINES? IS THE CURRICULA CONSISTENT WITH THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF HISTORY AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AS THEY ARE DEFINED AND PRACTICED?

An important task of assessment is to focus upon the work that children are called upon to do in school. Illuminating the relationship between curriculum and the patterns of interaction in school that can enable educators to understand the meaning of being a student. Some specific questions that can guide the examination of curriculum are:

3 (A) Is the knowledge children are to learn based upon current scholarship? Are the statements about human affairs accurate? Do they allow children to understand human variety? Or, do they oversimplify so as to tell us little about differences among people and the social conditions that prevail and have prevailed? The statements of study should only be broad enough to enable children to deal with contrasting life styles, conflicting belief systems, and social change.

3 (B) Do curriculum activities concern social study as a pattern of procedures rather than specific, discrete and graded steps? Is planning for instruction concerned with the constellation of activities that relate to the whole rather than the independent and separate? Inferring, measuring, classifying, for example, have meaning only <u>within</u> the process in which students direct their curiosities to life experiences and human artifacts. Related to this, we must ask: Do curriculum activities take into account the use of intuition and aesthetic feelings in proposing plans for instruction?

3 (C) Do the materials of social studies instruction guide children toward an awareness of the limitations of the methods and knowledge of social study? Do children learn how to test the statements of knowledge through collecting and interpreting evidence? Are learning facts, concepts, or generalizations related to seeking answers to social issues and problems or are they ends in themselves? Curriculum materials must provide activities that direct attention to ideas and methods as tentative and changing.

3 (D) Do courses of study identify a variety of "lenses" or conceptual frameworks by which children can focus upon their social situation? Are children asked to work with different descriptions and explanations? Previously we discussed various historical viewpoints one might take concerning American westward expansion and revolution. It is important that children have opportunities to consider the events of our social situation from a variety of lenses. Any one framework must be considered inadequate for the study of human affairs.

To summarize, these three questions focus on developing descriptions of the quality of life produced by school experiences. They direct attention to fundamental tasks of assessment and go further than previous approaches in seeking an understanding of what schools, teachers, and students are doing in the field of social studies. Furthermore, we believe that there are valid and reliable approaches within education and the social disciplines that can deal with these essential variables of school practices. It necessitates, though, a critical shift in what has been traditionally and erroneously conceived of as school assessment and evaluation.

It is important to emphasize that the focus of assessment is on the school and the classroom even though it is ultimately the individual student that we are all concerned about. However, a concern for the individual student as to whether or not he is developing awareness or understanding does <u>not</u> logically lead to a conception of assessment based upon achievement factors. One could presumably test students to see if they had a particular set of attitudes and conceptions about knowledge and the study of social problems. However, such testing as we previously indicated tends to focus on the worth of students and not the school. In addition, the separation of knowledge, processes and values tends to trivialize those elements.

What is crucial to assessment is the patterns of interactions available to students in school. It is the expectations, demands and dispositions towards learning found in school that channel student actions and perceptions. These interpretations of present experience cannot be standardized, though, since meaning is related to each individual's past experiences as well as the current situations of classroom learning. (The fact that I have lived in Mexico for a summer, for example, will influence how I approach a study of Latin America in way different from other classmates.) Educators are therefore compelled in assessment to focus on the varied relationships, roles, and phenomena provided for children.

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